

Focus

Wild Arizona

Key Words:

Anecdote: a brief story about an interesting event

Metaphor: a comparison of two unlike objects, usually using “is” or “are”

Simile: a comparison of two unlike objects, usually using “like” or “as”

In 1909, a young man graduated from Yale University in Connecticut, boarded a westbound train and traveled cross-country through Albuquerque, N.M., with a final stop in Holbrook, Ariz. From there, he spent two days in a stagecoach on a bumpy road to get to Springerville, Ariz. The man was Aldo Leopold. He was beginning his first job as a forest assistant in the Apache National Forest.

Aldo Leopold was a hunter, conservationist, forester, educator and author. His observations and experiences in the outdoors gave him the background to radically change and develop the field of wildlife management. The ideas he wrote down in such famous books as “A Sand County Almanac” and “Game Management” still are relevant today.

Although Leopold only spent two years in the state (and another 13 in New Mexico), his time in the Southwest dramatically shaped his philosophies and his career. One

hundred years later, we celebrate his arrival into the region.

Map It:

On a map of the United States, identify New Haven, Conn., (where Yale University is located); Albuquerque, N.M.; and Holbrook and Springerville, Ariz. Draw straight lines to connect these cities in the order that Leopold visited them.

Approximately how many miles did Leopold travel to get to his first job?

Although it wouldn’t be published until after his death, “A Sand County Almanac” may be Leopold’s most popular and important book. The book is a collection of essays describing Leopold’s observations of the natural world and outlining his conservation philosophy.

The first section of the book depicts life on a country farm in Wisconsin, where Leopold grew up. It can be viewed as “nature’s calendar.” Each chapter contains vivid **anecdotes** showcasing animals and plants found around the farm during different months of the year. Some brief examples of his monthly stories include:

“In January one may follow a skunk track, or search for bands on the chickadees, or see what young pines the deer

have browsed, or what muskrat houses the mink have dug, with only an occasional and mild digression into other doings. January observations can be almost as simple and peaceful as snow, and almost as continuous as cold.

“The same logic that causes big rivers always to flow past big cities causes cheap farms sometimes to be marooned by spring floods. Ours is a cheap farm, and sometimes when we visit it in April we get marooned.

“One way to hunt partridge is to make a plan, based on logic and probabilities, of the terrain to be hunted. This will take you over the ground where the birds ought to be ... Another way is to wander, quite aimlessly, from one red lantern to another. This will likely take you where the birds actually are. The lanterns are blackberry leaves, red in October sun.”

A Look at Language

The book not only contains great science, but also is well-written, using many different writing techniques. For example, the book contains many **metaphors** and **similes**, two common ways to compare things.



By Eric Proctor

From the passages above:

- Underline a metaphor in blue.
Which two objects are being compared?
- Underline a simile in red.
Which two objects are being compared?

Do the Research

What if Leopold had grown up in Arizona? Rather than stories of blackberries and mink, his anecdotes probably would have been much different. Below are some events Leopold might have described instead. Using your own knowledge, the Internet or a reference book, try to determine in which month each event occurs:

- Sandhill cranes leave for their yearly migration north.

- Saguaro cactus flowers blossom.

- Monsoon storms drench the Sonoran Desert.

- Turkey hunts begin in the high country.



ILLUSTRATION BY TRACY HILL

Just for Fun

What events and stories would you include if you were going to create an Arizona Nature Calendar? Think about what it is like to live in Arizona. Try to find at least one

or two interesting things that happen in the natural world each month. Write short stories or anecdotes that describe each of these events in an entertaining way. If possible, include personal experiences and clever comparisons. Be creative and have fun. 🦋

■ This feature is part of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Focus Wild Arizona program, a free educational program for teachers, parents, students

or anyone interested in learning about wildlife and habitat. Visit our Web site, www.azgfd.gov/focuswild, to find exciting lessons and resources.